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THE Worceſterſhire TRAGEDY: OR, THE Wrongs of the Widow and Fatherleſs juſtly puniſh'd.

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THE

Worceſterſhire Tragedy.

AT *Bromſgrove* in *Worceſterſhire*, liv'd Mr. John Weldon, a Gentleman whom Providence had bleſs'd with an Eſtate of near 300 l. per Ann. great Part whereof he employ'd to the Uſe of his Heavenly Lord and Maſter, in Works of Charity. Never marrying, nor having any Relations to poſſeſs his Wealth after him, he made the Poor his Friends, and took Delight in Relieving them at his Gate, none went away empty-handed; his uſual Saying was, *They beſt know whether they wanted it or not, they appear to me Objects of Charity, and I'll relieve them.* His only Care was to aſſiſt the poor Widows and Fatherleſs, wherein he took a Pride, and often would ſay: *Theſe are my Relations, Wife, and Children, Brothers and Siſters.* The Sick he alſo viſited every Week. Among the Relieved was the Widow of *Joſiah Jordon*, a Husbandman, who was left in great Poverty with 3 ſmall Children; ſhe was a Woman of extraordinary Piety, and he allow'd her 4 s. a Week, and a Peck of Corn, for ſupport of herſelf and Children. Theſe bounteous Works of Charity made him admir'd by the Virtuous, but condemn'd by the Covetous.

Having no Relation, he resolv'd to make Mr. Tho. Weldon, his Namesake, a Grazier in the next Parish, his Executor, that his Estate might continue in the Name, tho' not in the Blood. *He* therefore sent for Mr. Tho. Weldon, and told him, that as God had blessed him with a plentiful Estate, and having no Relations, he esteem'd him as a Brother, and would make him sole Executor of all, except a few Legacies he would leave to the Poor, which he desir'd him to perform after his Death, as he expected a Blessing from heaven: To this Mr. Weldon made many fair Promises, binding the same by Oaths and Imprecations, that he would not only do what he had requested, but greatly add thereto, and make it his Endeavour to follow the Example he had set before him. The Gentleman being pleas'd, rested satisfy'd that he had so well settled his Estate, and that his Will would be so faithfully perform'd after his Decease. Being at the Age of 63, like good King *Hezekiah*, he had no sooner thus no sooner set his House in Order, but a Fit of Sickness seiz'd him, Death knock'd at his Door, and told him his Hour was approaching. Three Days before his Death he sent for Mr. Weldon, telling him, that a short time would put an End to his Life, therefore he begg'd him to remember his Promise, and be a Father to the Poor. Mr. Weldon again assur'd him, his Desires should certainly

ed. If they are not ſaid the languiſhing Gentleman, I ſhall not reſt in my Grave. May I not live upon the Ground, and never enter the Kingdom of Heaven, if I wrong the Poor, or keep any thing from them thou haſt given them. Brother, I am ſatisfy'd, ſaid the ſick Perſon; therefore let my poor Family this Day be ſent for, and with my own hands I will once more feed them before I leave this world, and let them know what I have done for them. Twenty Five poor Perſons were then ſent for, and their Names being call'd over, they were plac'd at table, the Gentleman himſelf being at the ſame table, he help'd them all with his own hand, ſaying to Mr Weldon, this is the particular Family over whom I leave you Steward: And as for you, ſaid he to the Poor People you are God's People, my Friends and Relations, Objects of Pity and Compaſſion; and for the Services I have done you, I hope I am going to gain a heavenly Inheritance. This Gentleman is my Nameſake, I have conſtituted him my Executor, and have by my will given each of you Something to ſupport you in your Neceſſities. I have ordered my Executor to give the Widow *Jordan* 4 s. and half a Buſhel of Corn weekly for the Support of her and her Children, whoſe Schooling I have alſo taken Care of, and allow'd 5 l. to each of them to bind them out Apprentices to Trades, with 10 l. a-Piece when their Times are expir'd. As to the Reſt, ſome of whom are lame, and

and cannot work, I have allow'd each of you sixpence a Day, and a Peck of Corn a Week, so long as you live. Make good Use of what I have given you, serve the Lord, and his Blessing be with you. At this Declaration they return'd many hearty Thanks for his Love towards them. Then desiring to be put to Bed, he again said, Brother, I have done with this World, remember your Promise, to perform my Will to the Poor. If I don't, reply'd Mr *Weldon*, may the Judgments I have wish'd fall on me. Two Days after this worthy Gentleman dy'd, and Mr Weldon took Possession of his Estate For a few Months he perform'd the Deceas'd's Will, but being of a covetous Nature, his Disposition was soon alter'd, and instead of Relieving the Poor, he began to be surly to them, pinch'd their Allowance, and would give them bad Corn, which they could not eat, and when they complain'd of his hard Usuage, he'd curse them, and make his Servants drive them from his Door; and at length refus'd to relieve them at all, saying, *He was not confin'd to any thing, all was left to his Pleasure, and that if he was a Justice of the Peace he would whip all such lazy Creatures to work.* They made their Complaints to several, but found the old Proverb true, *That the Rich have many Friends, but the Poor few will regard.* Such indeed was their Case, for he being Rich, none vindicated their Cause Then they lamented the Loss of their great Benefactor, and intreated for Justice from Hea

years. The widow *Jordan* dy'd soon after with Grief, and the Parish would not take Care of her 3 Children, because Mr. *Weldon* was left in Charge; they therefore were forc'd to beg for Relief, and one Day going to the Gate of Mr *Weldon* beg'd for a bit of Bread, or that he would give them a Peck of Corn to make Bread. He said [illegible] *I hate to see these Dogs here [illegible] is a Stack of Corn in such a Field, come take them, and welcome, there's Corn enough, but keep my Counsil.* The Infants rejoic'd that they should have Corn, and went with them. Says the Child left, who was about 10 Years old, *We shall get one Neighbour or another to bake us a Cake*, not thinking what the bitter Meal was intended for them. Being come to the Corn Stack, Mr. *Weldon* cry'd, *Come, ye Dogs, here's Corn enough for ye, eat and glut your Maws, or I'll [illegible] you to Death.* Then standing by them with Rods in their Hands, [illegible] choak'd, not regarding their Cries and Intreaties; and at length with these Firgures thrust Corn down their throats till choak'd to Death. Having accomplish'd their Villanies, to conceal the same, at Night they took the dead Bodies, and fill'd their Aprons with Corn that it might look as if they had stolen it, and choak'd themselves with hasty Eating, then laid them in a bye Field, and he gave his Man 10 Guineas not to discover it. A few Days after their Bodies were found, and burry'd in their poor Mother's

Grave, no great Notice being taken of it. A Fortnight after Conſcience terrify'd the Servant *James* ſo, that he hang'd himſelf in his Maſter's Orchard. Mr VVeldon now thought himſelf ſecure from being diſcover'd; but whilſt he was looking upon this ſad Spectacle, his Shepherd came and told him, *That as he was unfolding his Sheep in the Morning, he perceiv'd moſt of them to be full of crawling worms, and he fearcd they would Dye of the Rot.* He reply'd, *May that word rot thy Tongue, and that Tongue rot thee, for bringing me ſuch rotten Tidings.* With that he went to take up a Pitchfork to knock the poor Shepherd down, but in catching hold of the ſame haſtily, he hurt his Hand with one of the Prongs; his Hand began to ſwell, and Conſcience began to ſting, ſo that he would have put an End to his Days, had he not been prevented: A Surgeon was ſent for to dreſs it, but to no Purpoſe, for it ſoon ſpread all over his Body. Several went to ſee him, eſpecially the Rev. Mr. *Reynolds* Miniſter of the Pariſh, who offer'd to pray by him, but he would not ſuffer him. Two Servants lay in the ſame Room to attend him. At one o'Clock they perceiv'd the Chamber-Door to open, and the Ghoſts of a Man, Woman, and 3 Children in white, and the Children with Ears of Corn in their Hands, approaching him, who was awake, and ſaid, *VVell, you Apparitions, do you come to tax me with my Breach of Oaths and Promiſes? VVill it not ſatisfy you that I am rotting alive?* To which the firſt Ghoſt reply'd, *I am thy abuſed Friend,*

Friend, for which thou haſt highly offended God. Then ſaid the next, I am the VVidow *Jordan*, whom thou cheated, and thereby broke my Heart; the Curſe of th widow be upon thee, Vengeance has taken hold of thee. Then Then ſaid the 3 Children, O thou wicked wretch! we are the Children of this once poor widow, whoſe Cries thou would'ſt not hearken to but when we ask'd for Bread, thou crameſt dry Corn and Husks and all into our Throats, till you choak'd us to Death, the Curſe of the Fatherleſs is upon thee, Vengeance has taken hold o thee. *He* lay till the 10th of *December*, 1747, and then dy'd, deſiring all People to take warning by him, eſpecially all Executors, Truſtees, and Guardians for VVidows and Fatherleſs Children, leſt the ſame Curſe fall upon them.

The Truth of this Relation is atteſted by the whole Names are hereunder ſubſcrib'd.

John Reynolds, Miniſter.
George Johnſon, } Churchwardens
Peter King, }

FINIS.